

The Yakuts

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skillfully made; the wooden crockery was usually decorated with carving, 322
while the birchbark objects were decorated with horsehair designs.

Fur-dressing and tanning were very common. The materials were made 281
into a great variety of different things—clothing, footwear, and headgear; carpets, underlays (usually made of horse- or cow-hide, often sewn together from pieces into a checkered mosaic), blankets (from horse-skin); the leather vessels were made in a variety of sizes, ranging from the enormous simiir' for kumys down to the tiny pail or tursuk; various parts of saddles, straps, nooses and so on. The actual working of the leather and fur was very primitive—the hide was smoked (in ancient times and even in the 17th century this was done in earth stoves), crumpled, smeared with oil or cream, and there was no true tanning. The manufacture of reindeer suede was evidently learnt from the Evenks and the Evens. The Yakuts themselves did not make any cloth, either from animal wool or vegetable fiber—and only used what was imported. They did not know about spinning, nor how to roll felt. On the other hand, horsehair was widely employed; it was used for the ornamentation of birchbark and other objects, particularly for braiding different kinds of lassoes, cord, laces and nets, loops, fans to keep flies away, stuffing pillows for saddles and so on. The Yakuts also wove horsehair for decorative purposes. The individual hairs were twisted into a thread by hand on a bare knee, without using a spindle.

Blacksmithery was the only trade among the Yakuts which had long 326
acquired commercial importance, although normally it was not a separate trade from agriculture. In the 17th century the Russians found it to be highly developed among the Yakuts. The iron was obtained from marsh ore, of which there was a great deal, particularly on the Vilyuy. The ore was mined along the rivers Botoma, Amga, Sola and others. It was first smelted in primitive blast furnaces. But at the beginning of the 20th century the Yakut smiths were already working with imported iron. They forged it into a variety of implements and utensils, weapons and so on. Apart from iron, the Yakut smiths worked low-grade silver, which in the 19th and 20th centuries was partly obtainable by melting down Russian coins. This silver was made into various ornaments, linings for belts, whips, horse harnessing. The equipment used in the smithies was fairly unsophisticated—furnaces worked with bellows (portable), anvils, hammer and tongs. [316]

The fact that they engaged in ceramics singles out the Yakuts from the 323
people around them. They evidently retained pottery as a relic of the Neolithic stage. Nevertheless, it was very primitive. To the dark, viscous clay they used to add powder ground from old fired pots and then mold the clay mixture diluted with water into the walls of the pot with their hands (without a wheel), using a stone to smooth them out (on the inside) and a trowel (on the outside). The pots were fired in the hearth. The pottery varied in size and the shapes and designs were crude. In the last few decades, Yakut ceramics have been replaced by Russian ones.

Mammoth-ivory carving (Yakutiya is rich in mammoth skeletons), 321
which was probably not begun before the 19th century, was not a common trade, although it was an interesting one. The ivory was carved into a variety of trinkets and small boxes.

These were the main types of production among the Yakuts prior to 433
the Revolution. As a whole, the Yakut economy remained at a fairly low level of development, and by and large remained a subsistence economy. Nevertheless, the sale of homemade products acquired ever-greater 443
importance towards the end of the 19th century. This was mainly the case

233 say that they die from it. The castration is performed in the follow-
492 ing way: the natives "throw" the reindeer, two of them hold the reindeer by the legs, and one kneels down and chews the buck's testicles until they are destroyed.

[283] For catching the reindeer the natives use the "maam' t"--a rope which may be as long as 160 meters and which is plaited out for four or five thin straps. On one end of the maam' t there is a cross-piece made of a little stick--the karaka, or 'knot'--which is passed through both openings in a bone plate--the "pietelke." Before catching a reindeer with the maam' t the natives wind it around their left elbow, holding part of the rope--the part which does not have the loop formed by means of the "pietelke"--in their left hand; they take the other part of the rope in their right hand and, swinging it around, they throw it at the head of the reindeer they have chosen. The noose with the bone plate falls over the horns and tightens. Sometimes two men throw the maam' t at one reindeer at the same time from opposite sides of him. This method of catching the reindeer is called məkkytterer (to compel to fight). Often in winter and in summer at the time of the gnats, when the reindeer cluster together in a bunch, several men circle the herd with outstretched maam' t and act as a fence, which allows the other persons to go into the midst of the herd and catch reindeer with their bare hands. This method of catching reindeer is called eritterer (to compel to go around).

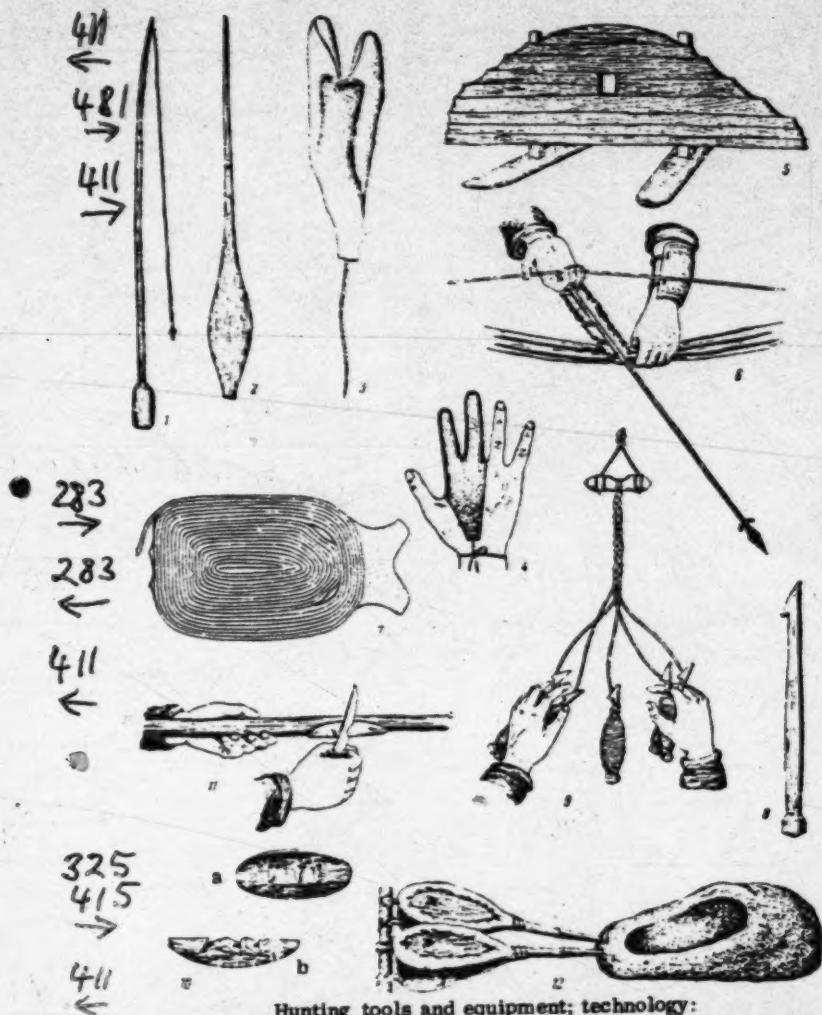
The Dolgan attain amazing skill in throwing the maam' t; they start practicing it when they are very young, throwing the maam' t over the horns of slain reindeer.

233 Once the animals have been caught the natives want to lead them
 284 to the place where they are to be harnessed or have a load put on them, and in order to do this they "string" the reindeer--five or six, and even more, at a time on one maam' t, tying them by means of dull knots called ile baaj'' (simple binding) or ilininen sieter baaj'' (ribbon for leading by the bridle) [Figure 2g]. These knots have the drawback that they can tighten up and choke the reindeer, and for this reason they are only used for leading the reindeer over short distances. In order to lead reindeer by the same method over longer distances special knots that do not tighten up are used; they are called tuomtuu tarder (the binding which is quickly undone) [Figure 2h].

In addition, they use still other knots for tying one reindeer: a) er kihi baaj''ta (the male binding) and b) çaktar baaj''ta (the female

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Peoples of Northern Siberia and the Far East



Hunting tools and equipment; technology:

- 1—flexible stick with cord for releasing a throwing arrow; 2—wooden throwing arrow; 3, 4—glove worn for archery; 5—shield on skis for hiding the hunter; 6—method of protecting the hand during archery; 7—method of cutting a spiral strip from reindeer-skin; 8—wooden hook for braiding lasso; 9—method of braiding lasso; 10a, b—wooden knife holder with holes for blades; 11—method of using knife holder; 12—clay kiln with blacksmith's bellows.

224 involved concealment: the hunters skillfully approached the herd behind a
[292] shield erected on runners. In the winter the hunters put on white coats with
chestpieces made of white dogskin, enabling them to crawl over the snow